

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2184

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, KS, JA, CH, TW
SUBJECT: KOREANS VIEWS ON US AND JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH THE PRC

REF: A) STATE 036614 (DTG 110115Z FEB 78; B) TOKYO 3417 (DTG
020816Z MAR 78); C) USNATO 02232 (NOTAL); D) SEOUL 1779 (DTG
040206Z MAR 78)

SUMMARY: ROK OFFICIALLY WELCOMES PROGRESS ON PART OF OTHER
NATIONS IN ACHIEVING BETTER RELATIONS WITH PRC AND HAS
REAFFIRMED ITS OWN INTEREST IN SIMILAR DEVELOPMENT. ROK
EFFORTS SO FAR UNSUCCESSFUL AND THEY REMAIN AMBIVALENT
ABOUT CHINESE INTENTIONS. AT SAME TIME THEY REMAIN CONCERNED
ABOUT TAIWAN, BOTH FOR THEIR OWN RELATIONS AND AS FURTHER
SYMBOL OF US INTENTIONS IN ASIA. JAPANESE PFT EFFORTS
ARE OF LESS CONCERN BUT KOREANS WOULD BE CONCERNED OVER
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POSSIBLE PARALLEL MOVES TOWARD PYONGYANG.

1. PRIME MINISTER CHOE KYU-HA REAFFIRMED ROKG INTEREST
IN ESTABLISHING CONTACTS WITH THE PRC IN HIS STATEMENT
TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MARCH 3 (REF D), FOLLOWING IN
THE TRAIN OF SIMILAR STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT PAK EARLIER
IN THE YEAR. DISCUSSING THE EFFORTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO

IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, KOREAN OFFICIALS HAVE SAID THAT THEY FEEL SUCCESS IN SUCH EFFORTS SHOULD BE GENERALLY HELPFUL TO THEIR OWN HOPES FOR RAPPROACHMENT WITH PEKING. THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS DESIRE IS OF COURSE TO OBTAIN SOME ASSURANCE THAT PEKING WOULD MODERATE PYONGYANG'S PERENNIAL HOSTILITY, BUT INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE RECENT SOVIET BUILD-UP IN ASIA HAS FURTHER REINFORCED THE KOREAN INTEREST IN BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THE KOREANS WILL SEEK ASSURANCES, HOWEVER, THAT ANY US-PRC NORMALIZATION INCLUDES PROVISIONS ON KOREAN SECURITY AND/OR NORTH-SOUTH CONTACTS.

2. SO FAR THE ROK HAS RECEIVED NO ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PEKING, HOWEVER, AND ALL OVERTURES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN IGNORED. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE AMBIVALENCE IN KOREAN THINKING ON RELATIONS WITH CHINA. AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHINA DIVISION IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY RECENTLY NOTED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER, KOREANS RECALL THE PRC'S ROLE IN THE KOREAN WAR, INCLUDING CHINESE OCCUPATION OF SEOUL, AND REMAIN DUBIOUS ABOUT THE REAL INTENTIONS OF THE PEKING GOVERNMENT TOWARD THE ROK.

3. DESPITE THE OFFICIAL ROK POSITION, MANY KOREANS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT HAVE CONVEYED THEIR ANXIETY ABOUT POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF US-PRC NORMALIZATION AS THE INR STUDY (REF A) INDICATES. IF NORMALIZATION
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WERE ACCOMPANIED BY US WITHDRAWAL FROM ITS COMMITMENT TO TAIWAN, AS THEY PUT IT, KIM IL-SONG WOULD PROBABLY INTERPRET SUCH A MOVE AS AN INDICATION OF US INTENTIONS RE KOREA. (THE SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE HERE, OF COURSE, IS THAT THE ROK CITIZENRY WOULD MAKE A SIMILAR DEDUCTION.)

4. AS REGARDS THEIR OWN RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN, THE KOREANS HAVE SOUTHT TO STEER A MIDDLE COURSE, HOPING TO MAINTAIN A SATISFACTORY RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT IRRITATING THE PRC. A ROC EMBASSY OFFICIAL RECENTLY INDICATED TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER A MEASURE OF DISAPPOINTMENT OVER WHAT HE SAW AS OFFICIAL COOLNESS TOWARD TAIWAN ON THE PART OF ROK OFFICIALS, NOTING INTER ALIA THAT THE ROK FOREIGN MINISTER OFTEN PASSED THROUGH THE ROC EN ROUTE TO OTHER COUNTRIES, BUT NEVER SEEMED TO HAVE TIME FOR A VISIT. KOREAN OBSERVERS HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED PERIODS OF CONSIDERABLY DISTANCING BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE DAY'S OF SEOUL'S FIRST GESTURES TOWARD PEKING, 1972-3. ON THE OTHER HAND, SEOUL REMAINS THE ONLY ASIAN CAPITAL WITH A ROC EMBASSY, AND WORKING RELATIONS REMAIN EFFECTIVE, AS WAS ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE SAME ROC OFFICIAL MENTIONED ABOVE. MOREOVER, A

GROUP OF ROC GENERALS MADE A PUBLICLY REPORTED VISIT TO SEOUL IN 1977, AND SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON IS INCLUDING TAIPEI ON HIS PRESENT TOUR OF ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN CAPITALS. AS NOTED IN EARLIER EMBASSY REPORTING, HOWEVER, THE ROK DEPENDS ON TAIWAN FOR SOME SIGNIFICANT TYPES OF MILITARY LOGISTIC SUPPORT AND THERE IS A STRONG POLITICAL AFFINITY BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS.

5. THE KOREANS ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN JAPANESE MOVES TOWARD A PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY WITH PEKING, BUT LESS IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED THAT THEY ARE WITH THE US ATTITUDE. AS INDICATED IN REF C, THE ROK OFFICIALLY WELCOMES THE PFT. SPECIFICALLY, IN ADDITION TO GENERAL GEO-POLITICAL INTERESTS, MANY KOREANS HOPE THAT CON-

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CLUSION OF THE TREATY WOULD FACILITATE MOVEMENT ON THE ROK-JAPAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT. NONETHELESS, THERE REMAINS SOME ANXIETY THAT CLOSER TIES BETWEEN TOKYO AND PAKING MIGHT LEAD TO PRESSURES ON JAPAN FOR A PARALLEL MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF PYONGYANG. THE ROK WILL THEREFORE BE WATCHING CLOSELY FOR REASSURANCE THAT THE JAPANESE BALANCE THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE PRC WITH PROGRESS ON ISSUES WITH THE ROK, PARTICULARLY THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT.
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